

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. M. BOSSAERT  
PALM SUNDAY

CHRIST'S ENTRANCE INTO OUR SOULS

Everything done by our Divine Saviour during His life on earth was done for our instruction. Let us see what lesson we may learn from His solemn entry into Jerusalem, of which we read in today's Gospel. Jerusalem is a type of our souls. When Christ entered Jerusalem the Feast was close at hand, and now Easter is approaching. He was visible to all as He entered the city, and now He wishes to enter our souls, invisibly it is true, but none the less really and essentially, in our Easter Communion. Every Catholic Christian ought to observe the festival of Easter, and prepare to give our Divine Saviour a worthy reception when He comes to his soul in the Easter Communion.

How ought we to prepare to receive our Lord worthily, so that when He comes, He may bring peace to our souls?

1. We must go forth to meet Him, as the crowd went out from Jerusalem when He was approaching the city from Bethphage, and we do this in the Holy Sacrament of Penance. When Jesus intended to enter Jerusalem, He sent two of His disciples on in front, saying to them: "Go ye into the village that is over against you, and you shall find an ass tied and a colt with her; loose them and bring them to Me." In the same way, before He enters our souls, and before we receive Him in Holy Communion, He sends out His priests, to whom He gave power to loose us from our sins, saying to them: "Whosoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven," and commissioning them to release penitent sinners from their sins. We are told that two disciples went to the village and did as Jesus commanded them, and in the same way our priests are always—but especially at Easter—ready to give absolution to all who are truly penitent, so that they may be worthy to receive Jesus in Holy Communion. A good confession is therefore the preparation which a soul makes when she is going to meet her Divine Saviour; it is the first and most important step towards making a good Communion at Easter, and at this season everyone ought to be thinking of it. Let us all do our best to make an honest confession of our sins and to be truly contrite; in that way alone can we escape all danger of committing sacrilege through communicating unworthily.

2. Being thus prepared to receive our Lord, let us spread our garments in His way, like the Apostles, of whom we read that they laid their garments upon the ass, and set Him thereon. A pious commentator tells us that these garments signify devotion, reverence, humility, faith, hope, and charity, and we should have all these things when we go to receive our Lord's Body. If we have faith—if we really believe that in Holy Communion Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God from all eternity, is truly and indeed present, as truly as He is and always has been present in heaven, we cannot fail to approach Him with reverence and to gaze at Him with awe; our reverence and awe will resemble those of the angels in heaven, who lie before Him prostrate in adoration. If we believe that He instituted this most holy Sacrament through love of us, and that He gives Himself to be our food and the nourishment of our souls, that we may have everlasting life, we can not fail to love Him in return, and to long ardently for this food. If, on the other hand, we consider how unworthy our sins have rendered us to receive this heavenly guest, we shall say with all humility: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof," and then, deriving fresh courage from the infinite mercy of God, who welcomes sinners, we shall add: "but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed." When the indescribably happy moment comes for Jesus to enter our souls and take up His abode there, let us rejoice and exult as did the crowds accompanying Him into Jerusalem; let us thank Him with all our hearts for coming to us, and make His dwelling-place fair and pleasing to Him. We can do this by keeping His Commandments loyally and by resolutely avoiding sin. These are the palms that we can strew in His way; let us keep them always fresh and green. This is how we should keep Easter and celebrate our Lord's entrance into our souls. Let us continue to live thus, that at the last we too may have a joyful entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen.

THE PASSION

It is hardly a truism to say that the Crucifixion is the greatest tragedy the world has ever beheld. Only two or three other events since the Creation approach it in moment. All these transcendent events are identified with Christ and the supreme work of the redemption, but our redemption was wrought through the death of the Saviour. The Resurrection is indeed the test miracle, but we were redeemed before the Resurrection. The redemption was a glorious work, but it was accomplished amid suffering unutterable and in circumstances of unparalleled shame. As we are deeply involved in the consequences, we cannot allow its annual commemoration to pass without demon-

strating, silently, indeed, that we have some sort of appreciation and at least some modicum of gratitude for the great things that were suffered for us and so sorrowfully wrought for our salvation.

The fourfold story of the Passion, as related in the Gospels, has been read by millions upon millions of the faithful. Many of them have been benefited beyond measure by the simple recital of the tragic circumstances of the betrayal, the condemnation, and death of the Son of God. Millions have read and heeded not. They acknowledge the appeal but they make no soul response. For such as these neither the Crucifixion nor the Resurrection has much meaning.

But if we have the faith to realize the dignity of the Sufferer and the boon which He has purchased for us, we cannot refuse to go in spirit to the garden, to the pillar, to the tribunal, and to Calvary. Near the cross we will find one who is neither disciple nor apostle, neither a grateful penitent nor a claimant for the first place in the kingdom, but an outsider, a man whose duty alone makes him a witness to all that transpires, a non-participant in the tragedy and its guilt, but one, withal, of clean heart and noble instinct,—even the Roman centurion who saw all and heard all and who, when he felt the earth trembling beneath his feet as if in terror at the unspeakable sacrifice of the Crucifixion, cried out in the enthusiasm of his new found faith: "Indeed, this was the Son of God."

It was, indeed, the Son of God. It was He that suffered all and He suffered it for the redemption of every son of man. To refuse our infinitesimal tribute of gratitude during the solemn commemoration of Holy Week is to prove ourselves unworthy and basely ungrateful. "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow."—Catholic Transcript.

FALLEN AWAY CATHOLICS

One of the serious questions of the day to Catholic leaders is the number of fallen-away Catholics to be found in both the country and city. In the country places, where schools in which religious instruction are given are far apart, or do not exist, and where Churches are miles from many Catholic families, it is easy to understand how in our busy days children grow up without having the opportunities for instruction and piety which are the foundation of a solid Catholic character.

The dangers to Catholicity in the country are largely negative, and may be partially overcome by diligence and sacrifice on the part of parents and clergy, when the priest has not too extensive territory to look after. In such instances the value of the Catholic paper cannot be overrated.

It brings its weekly message and keeps alive the spark of faith, as well as contributes the required information which active minds are seeking on all subjects today.

There is no more useful means in the Church of helping scattered families than a vigorous and well-timed weekly paper, which gives the news of the Church at large, as well as the Catholic attitude on public and social questions.

In the city the dangers are many and positive. Too often Sunday is made merely a day of rest and dissipation. Many allege that they are too tired to arise in time to assist at Mass, after the strenuous labor of the week, and the late hours of Saturday night. Other elements of city life, particularly dangerous, are the amusements, cheap theatres, movies and dance halls. In too many cases these means of recreation are transformed into places where religion and morality suffer. One of the useful functions of public authority should be a wise supervision over the places where the young spend their evenings and leisure hours. It is idle to find fault when a crop of thorns and thistles have grown up, if the sleeping husbandman did not guard his fields against the bad weeds and cockle. It is just as true of children, who seem to be as susceptible to dangerous impressions and evil suggestions as they are open to the attacks of disease germs.

Companions exert an influence which parents seldom realize, and as a consequence the Church is solicitous about keeping the young away from dangerous companions. This is much more difficult in the city than in the country, and in our day, when parental control has almost disappeared, presents a problem for serious consideration.

During the Lenten season this should be made a matter for our public prayers. Faith is a gift and like so many of God's graces is easily lost. No better practice could be followed than for each Catholic to take upon himself the blessings and the burden of bringing some negligent or fallen away companion to attend the public devotions and instruction in the Church. During this season in all our Churches special sermons are given, not only for strengthening the faith of Catholics, but for removing the difficulties and prejudices of non-Catholics. There is a dearth of zeal on the part of many good people, who seem to excuse themselves from all obligation of being their brother's keeper, by the excuse that he has similar opportunities for himself, and may resent the suggestion of invitation. Too often there is a want of zeal sometimes bordering on lukewarmness in this

attitude. The Catholic who is not willing to make an effort and even a sacrifice for his neighbor's good is selfish if not indifferent. Every man has a duty towards his neighbor. We Catholics in particular have a special duty towards the members of the Church, who on account of defective training or their own negligence have grown lax and are in danger of falling from the paths of virtue and truth.

Let Lenten time, then, be a season when every Catholic shall exercise something of the missionary spirit. Each of us has some friend or acquaintance who has fallen or is falling. Is it not an act of charity of the highest kind to reach out a helping hand to such a weak brother?—International Catholic.

DETRACTION

There may be ways by which one can sin more grievously against the Eighth Commandment, but there is scarcely any way by which people do sin more frequently, than by detraction. Detraction consists in injuring another's character by speaking ill of him. The ill report may be absolutely true—for if the accusation made is false, the sin would not be one of detraction, but rather of calumny, of which we shall speak later. Granted that what is said is true, what right have we to reveal without due cause, that which will injure the reputation of another? Our neighbor's greatest possession, as we have seen, is his honor and good name. When I unjustly rob him of the esteem in which others may have held him, either by direct accusations, or even by insinuations or imputations, I am doing him harm, the extent of which oftentimes cannot be measured.

THE MEASURE OF HARM

The very element of uncertainty which attaches itself to the consequence of my word or speech, ought in itself to make me chary of detraction. Some people seem to think that provided they do not lie about another, no evil has resulted.

"I said nothing that would injure his character—therefore I did not sin," is the deduction that is apparently often made. But does it follow that one can reason thus? What means have I of knowing the effect that my words may have on him who hears them? It may happen that they are spoken before a keen-sighted, prudent individual, who has already sized me up as a giddy gossip, and places no reliance whatever on any report that I may spread; but even here, where actual injury to the third party does not result, the fact that it might reasonably be calculated to follow from my talk, attaches to it the possibility of sin.

NOT ONLY PERSONS

When we speak here of a neighbor, we do not restrict the term to this or that individual living in the flesh. What is said of a single person may apply with even greater force to a corporation or institution, inasmuch as the harm done is of more far-reaching consequence. Say, for instance, that one has built up a grievance against an institution of learning or a hospital, because of some inattention or unfavorable treatment. While a patient in the ward of the X. Y. Hospital, I may not have had danced upon me the attention which I felt I deserved. Am I therefore free to go about denouncing the institution and every official connected with it, discouraging any prospective patient with whom I come in contact from going there and doing all in my power to alienate the public mind in favoring or patronizing the place? Not by any manner of means. If I have been given sufficient reason to find fault with the way I was treated, then, as a resident of this glorious land of freedom I have the liberty of choosing some other hospital when I fall sick again, but I am not free to "injure another's character by speaking ill of that other," even though it be an institution that is concerned, and is the object of my detraction.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF GUILT

To determine the gravity of sin that may follow detraction, not only is the fault or defect which is exposed to be considered, but also the individuals themselves,—both the speaker and the one of whose fault he speaks. The manifestation of a grave defect in another is ordinarily likely to inflict a more serious injury on his good name than if the fault revealed were a slight one. Again, a person known to be prudent and worthy of credence, can do more harm by spreading defamatory reports than one who is garrulous and accustomed to gossip. Similarly, the fame which a man enjoys among his fellows, or the eminence of his position, must also be considered. For the more blameless one's name be, or the higher his position among men, the more detrimental is the result of any defamatory report spread about him. Because of their recognized position, a bishop or a priest would suffer far more serious injury through the revelation of some petty fault than would any ordinary layman, whose more grievous misconduct is made public. All these circumstances must be considered, then, in reckoning the blame one has incurred, through a sin of detraction.

UNCHARITABLE TALK

The difference between uncharitable talk and detraction is to be found in the loss of character which is consequent to detraction and which may not result from a mere remark or report that offends only charity. The latter virtue has a

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Those who are not as well and strong as they should be; those who are underweight; those who are "run-down" through overwork or sickness; should build up at once. To purify the blood, to build up strength and vigor, and to regulate the eliminating organs, so that the whole system would be in the best possible condition to resist disease.

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wider range than has justice, which I violate when I engage in detraction. Charity requires that I love my neighbor as myself. If I would not be guilty of lack of charity towards another in speech, then, I should refrain from saying anything about him, that I would not have said about myself. By this test, it is not difficult for me to decide whether or not I have spoken uncharitably of him. When what I have said has hurt his good name in another's opinion, however, I have not only offended against charity, but against justice as well.

IN CERTAIN CASES

It usually happens that one's revelation of another's fault is made to a third party under the guise of a secret, with the exacted promise that the news go no further. Unless there be some reason for even this limited divulgence, though, there occurs an injury to the first party's character. He has a right to the good opinion of all men, including the one in whom you reposed confidence, and your secret bound revelation deprives him of that person's good opinion. It is generally conceded, however, that one may narrate, for the purpose of relieving his mind, or of obtaining advice, the injury which has been done him by another, even at the risk of lowering him in the third party's estimation, provided the latter be a person of prudence, and is not likely to divulge the information which has been given him.

SELF-DEFENSE

When one's own reputation is at stake, in the face, for example, of false charges, or in a court of law, it may well happen that neither charity nor justice will be violated by revealing the actual truth, and showing up the evil ways of the real culprit. Such a course is not to be attributed to vengeance, but is taken rather in the interests of justice and charity to that which concerns us most of all, viz., our own good name and reputation, regard for which takes precedence over any other's, however near or dear to us the particular individual may be.—Catholic Transcript.

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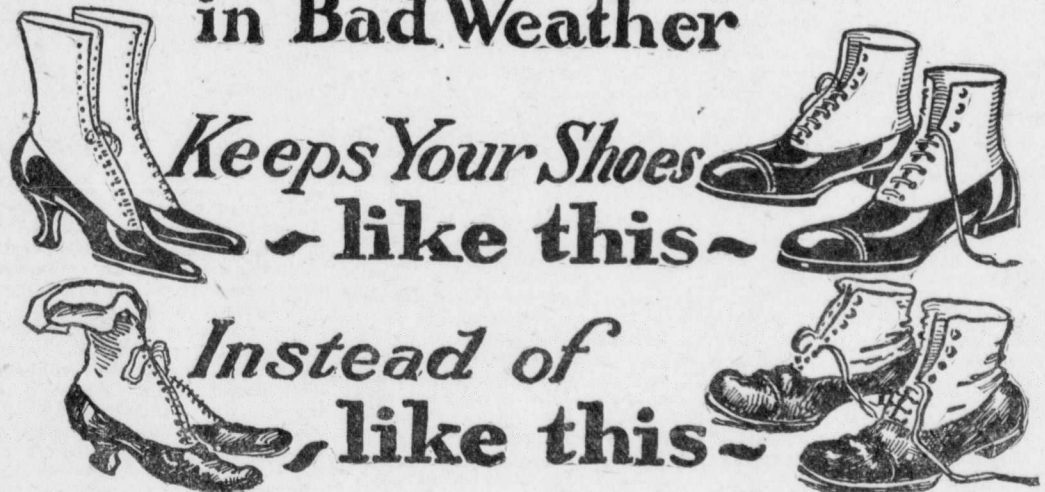
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